

# ***DER ATEM UND DAS LICHT***

## *The Unpublished Poetry Manuscripts of Walter Bauer's Last Decade*

by

**Henry Beissel**

There are enough passages in Walter Bauer's poems, diaries and letters to document, without my testimony from personal experience, that he was a tireless labourer in the sweatshop of his craft. It was a lesson he learnt as a small child watching his parents labour to fend off poverty--his father, a carter, moving sand, cement, stones, and lumber by horse and cart from dawn to dusk six days a week, and taking the boss out in a buggy on Sundays; his mother, hiring herself out to wash and clean for other people while struggling to raise five children from hand to mouth. Fifty years later he still remembers a teacher telling him: "*Brave Eltern. Vergiss das nicht, Freund Bauer. Brave Eltern,*"<sup>1</sup>--and he never did forget. For him, the dogged toil of his parents, the drudgery of their days, the sacrifices they made to enable him to become a teacher and a writer, could be justified and repaid only by an uncompromising commitment to work relentlessly to make the world a better place--juster and kinder than the one which condemned ordinary working people like his parents to a pitiless form of slavery. The unflagging engagement of his skills and talents as a writer became a lifelong, almost sacred, daily obligation which he confirms time and again in his writings, often relating it directly to his father whose labours become a metaphor for his own:

### *Eine Art Bauarbeiter*

Den ganzen Tag lang,  
Den Anblick der Welt vor mir,  
werkte und hämmerte ich  
Beharrlich an meinem TROTZDEM;  
Trug Sand und Zement,  
Steine und Balken und Kalk,  
Untermauerte, schlug und verfugte, und so  
Ward es, bei krummem Rücken, Abend.  
Für heute genug, heute hält es  
Den Unbilden stand.

Doch wie, wenn in der Nacht  
Alles zusammenbricht?  
Morgen ist ein anderer Tag;  
Das sagte mein Vater schon,  
Der ein Lastenträger war. (L 140)<sup>2</sup>

I doubt that there were many days, at least in the last decade of Walter Bauer's life, when he did not write something, even if it was only an entry in his diary. Not even the very considerable demands his university teaching post made on him during term could arrest his pen, and in the summer vacations he was reluctant to travel because it interfered with his writing schedule. As little as one line of poetry a day, I recall him telling me, will produce

a small volume of poetry by the end of the year. So he wrote and wrote--a good deal more than a line a day, and when he died in December 1976, he left behind a considerable body of work: 6 novels, 10 books of short stories and novellas, 10 books of poetry, 24 books of non-fiction (biographies, journals, essays), 4 books for young readers, to say nothing of a score of plays for the stage and for radio, and a half a dozen books he edited. As if that were not enough, there is also a substantial amount of unpublished writing, the most important of which--apart from the over sixty volumes of handwritten diary--are the manuscripts of several hundred poems; they are the subject of this essay.

The title of Bauer's last book of poetry, *Lebenslauf: Gedichte 1929 bis 1974*<sup>3</sup>, was intended to suggest a retrospective, a summing up<sup>4</sup>, almost as though he had a premonition of the end that came a year later. But representing forty-five years of a poet's writing life with 89 poems made for meagre coverage; only a handful of poems written since the publication, in 1962, of his last collection of all new poems, *Klopfszeichen*<sup>5</sup>, were included. In effect, Bauer suffered a second twelve-year period of silence, at least as a poet. It was almost more absolute than the one he endured in his native Germany from 1933 to 1945. Apart from a scattering of poems in journals and anthologies, the only other new poems to appear in print in his last decade were those I translated and published in the bilingual *The Price of Morning*<sup>6</sup> in 1968, and (in translation only) in *A Different Sun*<sup>7</sup>, as well as 3 poems translated by Humphrey Milnes as part of his special edition of 12 poems, *A Slight Trace of Ash*<sup>8</sup>, both in 1976, and 3 poems I translated for a "Tribute to Walter Bauer" in the double issue of the *Tamarack Review*<sup>9</sup>. All in all, from 1962 till today, of the more than 600 poems in manuscript fewer than 60 have appeared in print. About half of these have been published only in English--a reflection of Bauer's ambivalent situation as an emigrant.

A caveat is in order at this point. After the war, Bauer published poems and short stories extensively in local papers, magazines, calendars and anthologies in Germany. To track down every one of these is a Herculean labour I'm neither equipped nor inspired to tackle. Not even his German agent, who placed all these pieces, could give me an accurate list of their publication. By the early sixties this popular demand was slowing to a trickle. It is possible that some of the poems of the period under discussion came before the public by one of the aforementioned venues. If so, there sure weren't many.<sup>10</sup> The advent of TV in the fifties had shifted the popular taste away from the literary to the visual, while at the same time the so-called "German Economic Miracle" was creating satiated minds less accessible to poetic than to mercantile sensibilities.

In the countless conversations and discussions we enjoyed over the years, Walter often complained bitterly about the neglect of his work in his homeland. Sometimes he attributed it to the tyranny of a new artistic fashion visited upon the literary scene by writers determined to conceal or forget the Nazi past, by pseudo-intellectual literati without a moral commitment trying to pass off vapid sophistication and strident sensationalism as avant-garde. This protest against the rule of the mediocre and of charlatans was not entirely unjustified, but the mass media have made this a more universal phenomenon of our time. The deeper root for Bauer's discord with the new writers of post-war Germany was generational.

From 1933 to 1945 Bauer lived in an intellectual and artistic vacuum. If his voice was allowed to be heard at all, it was never above a whisper. The conditions necessary for a writer's growth and development--the exchange of ideas with other writers, the challenge and provocation of serious critics, and the dialogue with his readers--all this was totally missing during the Hitler years. So, as a writer, Walter Bauer stood still for twelve long years--as did the rest of the country. When the Thousand-Year Reich expired and a new life of the mind slowly struggled to be born in Germany, the new writers (many of them still in their teens in 1945 when Bauer was past forty) took their cue from the contemporary writers in the United States, France and Britain. Bauer, however, picked up where he had left off when the barbarians silenced him: in an artistic and ideological framework he had acquired in the twenties. This 30-year hiatus between himself and the new writers, he never bridged. It was part of the reason why he left Germany.

Bauer's writing was out of sync with the literary fashions of his time, as other (successful) writers had been before him. His emigration to Canada in 1951, when he was at the height of his career, only widened the gulf. He moved into a double exile: the continued use of his mother tongue exiled him from his fellow Canadians; his newly acquired transatlantic perspective exiled him from his fellow Germans. Still, Bauer's alienation from his public was never total; he always had readers and fans, but their numbers diminished over the years. At the same time publishers were shifting their commitment from literature to the maximization of profits. 'Bauer just doesn't sell any more', some of them told me and shrugged their shoulders.

Naturally, he was aware of what was happening. His royalty statements told the story, and he, who was financially hard pressed all his life, got the message. Yet he never wavered in his resolve as a writer to bear witness. The poetry manuscripts he submitted to his publishers were returned, even by those who had supported him, with polite, evasive letters about market pressures and the caprice of public taste. Walter swallowed hard and went on writing, determined to break new ground. I don't think he ever fully understood the complexity of the reasons for his estrangement from the German reading public.

The approximately 600 unpublished poems, which testify so compellingly and sadly to his alienation, fall into two categories: those he himself prepared for publication, and those he did not. The first consists of three book-length manuscripts: *Logbuch*, *Verse von einer Universität*, and *Atemzüge*, all three of which he submitted to different publishers, and all three of which were rejected. To the second category belong a sprawling sequence of small batches of poems gathered under the title *Notizheft*, and one called *In Mein Notizheft*, part of which evolved into *Logbuch*; a series of groups of poems entitled *Postkartengedichte* which was a fourth book in the making; and finally, an undetermined number of poems<sup>11</sup>, many of them written in the last two or three years of his life, which are not designated for any particular collection.

There are four typescripts entitled *Notizheft*, and one *In Mein Notizheft*. The first three of them are in a mimeographed and stapled format, containing 34, 34, and 38 poems respec-

tively. The first two of them are signed "*Walter Bauer*", but there is no date on them. From internal evidence I have concluded that the first section was probably written between the late summer and early winter of 1965, and the second in the last six months of 1966. The third group is dated "*December 1967*", which means that it was probably sent out for Christmas. For Bauer, writing poetry meant bringing light into a dark world. In one of the *Notizheft* poems he says of poetry: "*Sie soll das Dunkel nicht scheuen/Und manche Dinge ins Helle rücken.*" (N 19) It is therefore not surprising that it was his custom to send his friends a small gift of poetry for the winter solstice. That's when I received these particular manuscripts, and the mimeographed format suggests he made multiple copies to send to all his friends. In all probability other copies of these manuscripts are still extant, so that the dates of the first two can eventually be verified or corrected.

All of the 106 poems in the first 3 parts of the *Notizheft* are untitled and unrhymed; those that are later included in the manuscripts he prepared for publication acquire a title then. Most of the poems are very short, usually two or three, sometimes more, to a page. "*Eine Art Bauarbeiter*", the poem quoted at the beginning of this article, makes its untitled appearance here (1967; N 87) before it finds its way into *Logbuch*. It conveys a good sense of the reflective tone of all these poems. They are, as the title of the collection suggests, entries into a poetic diary--thoughtful, soft-spoken, lax in form and casual in diction, but often quite remarkably lyrical. Like the very first one:

Heute nacht weht der Schneewind  
Von Labrador--horch! : Die Eisschollen  
Der Arktis knirschen  
In der zusammengepressten Stadt.

Heute nacht liege ich  
Unter einem alten, vollen Birnbaum,  
Den ich in meiner Kindheit so gut kannte,  
In unverletzbarem Frieden.

Horch: die Bienen fernen Sommers summen  
Im alten Baum im grünen Himmel  
Im Eiswind von Labrador. (N 1)

A childhood memory drifts across half a century and two continents to redeem a Canadian winter. There is a touch of nostalgia which returns in some of the poems of this period, but it never succeeds in silencing the voice of the humanist and moralist. That note is struck in a very short poem which I want to quote because it is the basis for my dating of the second section (1966), and because it offers a rare glimpse into Bauer's workshop.

Wenn sie den Mond erreichen,  
Wird dann in Georgia, U.S.A.,  
Noch immer Unrecht gesprochen werden? (N 51)

Clearly, this verse was written before Armstrong set foot on the moon in July 1969. I am persuaded by the evidence that it was probably written in the summer of 1966.<sup>12</sup> In January



of that year the Russians had successfully launched Luna IX, the first spacecraft ever to land on the moon. The Americans followed in June with Surveyor I. A euphoria swept North America and, indeed, the world--the dream of putting a man on the moon was about to come true. But here on earth this was the time of the civil rights struggle in the American south. In June, the same month in which the U.S.A. put its first spacecraft on the moon, James Meredith was ambushed in Mississippi, triggering a huge civil rights demonstration. A little later that summer a black man was arrested in Atlanta, Georgia, on suspicion of stealing a bicycle, and shot, setting off race riots in that city. The poem refers to two momentous events in human history: the race for the moon and black liberation, conflating them ironically for a quick moralistic response. Precision in such matters was important to Bauer, as it is to any serious poet. When this verse resurfaces in ~~the~~ *Logbuch* in 1971, things have changed:

*Hoffnung, Befürchtungen?*

Wenn sie die Venus erreichen  
Wird dann  
Noch immer Unrecht gesprochen werden? (L 181)

The poem now has a title that reenforces the Janus-faced stance of the persona. But the moon is gone: Armstrong has by now 'reached' it. So we move on to the next heavenly body--Venus. The poem gains ironic depth from the mythic dimension of Venus as the goddess of love, and from the scientific fact that the catastrophic conditions of the fiery planet Venus make any thought of landing a manned spacecraft there utopian. In order to universalize the theme of injustice, the poet drops the reference to Georgia, cutting the second line to the bare bones. The verse turns away from the concrete and particular to the abstract and general as it condenses. What we end up with is an aphorism. This insight into Bauer the craftsman at work reveals the didactic impulse at the heart of his poetry. It is especially valuable because he rarely revised poems once he had typed them up.

The fourth section is a group of 51 poems enscribed "*In Mein Notizheft*" on the cover sheet and dated "25-8-1968", both in Bauer's own hand. There are 21 standard size sheets of onion skin paper, which are carbon copies of a typed manuscript, held together by a paper clip. It actually consists of 6 subsections, each separately entitled "*In Mein Notizheft*", and dated, again in Bauer's hand, consecutively, "6-7-1968" (9 poems), "14-7-1968" (5 poems, though one of them, "*Splitter*", has six untitled, separate segments, averaging 7 short lines each), "21-7-1968" (10 poems), "28-7-1968" (6 poems), "7-8-1968" (8 poems), "25-8-1968" (13 poems). Evidently, the poems were written in the space of two summer months, probably more or less at the rate of one a day, for such was Bauer's discipline.

But something, apart from the overall title, has changed: all of the individual poems, however short they may be, have their own titles, and these are firmly underlined. The poems are also more carefully crafted; a handful of them are actually rhymed. They are no longer casual jottings in a poetic notebook, though many of them are still terse and aphoristic. Thematically, they cast a wider net. There is one poem, for instance, in rhymed couplets,

about the mythical Phoenix; another is a 2-page long monologue, "*Bemerkung zu Don Quixote*" in which the knight who tilts windmills rides laughing to his death:

Er lachte über die Welt und sich selbst.  
Über sich selbst in der Welt lachte er, herzlich.  
Unser geliebter Herr Quixote de la Mancha erkannte,  
dass man kein Narr sein muss, um Narrheiten zu tun. (N 130)

The larger seriousness of the poems in *In Mein Notizheft*, and the greater attention Bauer pays to form are perhaps due to his realization that the *Notizheft* poems were the beginning of a potential book. The publication of the bilingual *The Price of Morning* in Vancouver in the spring of 1968, and its very positive critical reception both in Canada and in Germany, had buoyed him up at a time when the approach of his 60th birthday and the threat of retirement from the university were casting dark shadows ahead. The publication of another book of poetry must have suddenly become very real and desirable, and what better place to start than with the 106 poems already written. So he began to think more concretely of a title and decided *In Mein Notizheft* would be better than the threadbare *Notizheft*, and he began to compose poems that would give such a collection more substance. This is largely speculation on my part, but I know from experience that this is how books of poetry sometimes take shape, and it is not uncharacteristic of Bauer, as the *Postkartengedichte* will show. It's the best way I know to account for the shift in tone:

*Besucher, unerwartet*

Eine ganze Nacht hat er an meinem Bett gesessen,  
Undurchdringlich und erhaben stumm,  
Und mit kaltem Atem mir die Zeit bemessen,  
Und die Zeit, so sagte er, die Zeit sei um.  
Als sie, die ich lang bedenkenlos genossen, schwand,  
Hab ich plötzlich und zu spät das kleinste Ding als gross erkannt.

"Lass doch mit dir handeln," sagte ich zu ihm, dem Tauben,  
"Früher oder später, was ist dir ein Atemzug?"--  
Sagte er: "Was ist er dir? Nun? Und kein Worteklauben."--  
"Alles: Gehen, Sehen, Lieben, Essen, Trinken, mehr: zu Zeiten: Flug."--  
Sagte er: "Das sagt ein jeder. Doch was dich betrifft, ist's nicht genug.  
Etwas andres?"--"Ja. Leben preisend, Leben fordernd, will ich schreiben."--  
"Gut. Um solcher Narrheit willen werd ich eine Weile fernebleiben."

Erst im Morgengrauen ist er fortgegangen;  
Und ich ging ihm Schritt um Schritt zur Türe nach,  
Langsam, noch von einem Grabtuch kalt umfassen,  
Während Schweiss wie Tau mir aus der Stirne brach.  
Als die Nacht, die lange, wie ein Rosenrauch entschwand,  
Hab ich plötzlich und noch nicht zu spät kleinstes Ding als gross erkannt. (N 143)

The conventional formality of this poem along with the traditional subject of high seriousness--an encounter with death--has no parallel among the easy and relaxed poems of the first

three sections of ~~the~~ *Notizheft*, and the sequence continues in the new heightened tone four months later. *Notizheft* eventually becomes *Logbuch*, and, I think, it may even have spawned *Atemzüge* in which this same poem is included--with a slight but significant difference in the title: "*Besucher, erwartet*". By 1971, as Bauer is approaching the age of 70, death has changed from the 'unexpected' to the 'expected' visitor.

For the fifth section of this sequence, Bauer returns to the earlier title, *Notizheft*. It is dated "1968", and the dedication suggests that it was another of his Christmas missives. It contains 38 poems on 11 pages; all of them are short and unrhymed, but all of them have titles. In subject matter they range from Mozart and Teilhard de Chardin to the schoolyard across the street and the writer's hand:

*Hand*

Gealterte Hand,  
Wort um Wort setzend  
Wie der Maurer  
Stein zu Stein,  
Ist noch die junge Hand,  
Die kühne Knabenhand,  
Die gross über die Seiten schrieb:  
Es werde Licht! (L 36)

This poem firmly establishes the link between poetry and light. It boldly claims for writing the status of an original act of creation: let there be light! The subtext is: in the beginning was the word...And that is indeed how the world began for him, the unskilled labourer's child who through reading and writing freed himself from his native working-class milieu, who as a small boy determined that his would be the path of light, though he would never abandon the exploited and untutored multitude to their dark and dumb fate. The modest tone of this verse belies its far-reaching implications both for the life of the poet and his art; its chiselled form too argues for a poet not thinking of a notebook but of a published book. That Bauer by this time did have a book in mind is borne out by the fact that of the 38 poems in this final section 33 were included in *Logbuch*. In all, of the 106 poems in the five-part *Notizheft* sequence Bauer placed 67 in his *Logbuch*.

The *Notizheft* manuscripts started out as a gathering of occasional verses, recording the responses of the poet to things he heard or saw or felt in the daily routine of life: walking to the office, the wind in the trees, lecturing to his students, the blossoming of a rose, election promises, birds in the sky, clearing up his desk, rain at night, a news report, reading Chinese poets, the return of spring, listening to Mozart--everything is occasion for a celebration of life and for the reaffirmation of a moral order. Consistent with this reading is the most frequently recurring image in these poems, it is central to at least 30 of them: *Licht*--not only the light that makes the beauty of the world visible but the light that leads the human spirit out of the darkness of ignorance and greed. It is the poet's burden to spread that light:

Poet:  
Treuester Verehrer der Sonne,  
Verbreite das Licht,  
Dem du anhängst. (N 20, VI)

*Notizheft* turned into *Logbuch*. A logbook, while allowing the same thematic freedom as a notebook, in addition derives a structure from its function as a record of the technical data of a ship's journey at sea, which in turn becomes a metaphor for human life, one that is important to Bauer. "*Im Laufe des Tages*" tells us that "*Auf hohem Meer begegnen wir/Der Sonne und der Nacht./Bon voyage, mein Freund.*" This transformation of the manuscript seems to have occurred in the summer of 1971. He writes to me in October of that year about three manuscripts he put together in the summer, of which one is *Logbuch*, "*den anderen Gedichtband, den ich im Sommer zusammenstellte*"<sup>13</sup> (the others were *Atemzüge* and *Verse von einer Universität*). I am quoting the passage in full in the Notes because it corroborates my earlier argument that it was due to a change in public taste, to financial pressures on his publishers, and his alien perspective, that Bauer was unable to get *Logbuch* or the other two manuscripts published.

Bauer published one more book of poetry, *Lebenslauf: Gedichte 1929 bis 1974*, and in the introduction he confuses the dating of *Logbuch* by, first, erroneously attributing *Atemzüge* (from which he includes several poems) to the year 1972<sup>14</sup>, and then saying that he refrained from including poems 'from a more recent manuscript, *Logbuch*'<sup>15</sup>. This clearly suggests that *Logbuch* is more recent than 1972, and that is just as clearly incorrect. In fact, if anything, *Atemzüge* is the more recent of the two, indeed of the three collections. To compound this puzzling oversight, 2 poems from *Logbuch*, "*Belehrung aus arktischen Gebieten*" (L 123) and "*Guter Fischfang*" (L 97) are included in *Lebenslauf*.<sup>16</sup>

The *Logbuch* manuscript contains 190 poems on 89 pages. It is a typescript on standard size, onion skin paper, unpaginated, and bound with staples and tape in a soft, beige, lightweight cardboard cover. Apart from the 67 poems that originate in ~~the~~ *Notizheft*, 12 poems from this collection also turn up in *Verse von einer Universität*. It would appear that only 16 of these poems have been published, 4 in the original German (2 of them in the bilingual *The Price of Morning*) and 15 in English translation.<sup>17</sup> All of the poems are unrhymed, and the language is deliberately 'simple' because Bauer mistrusts heightened speech:

*Besser einfach*

"Etwas in Worte kleiden."  
Ziehe das, was du sagen willst,  
Nicht zu schön an.  
Presse es nicht in Sonntags-  
Oder Festtagskleider.  
Die unscheinbaren, die Alltagsworte  
Sind glaubwürdiger,  
Wie Werktagssachen besser  
Und dauerhafter sind.  
Schöne Worte täuschen. (L 131)



Most of these poems are short--the shortest, two-liners like: "*Flammendes Licht,/Dir schliess ich mich an*" (L 67), or "*Die Tatsache des Atmens/Verschlägt mir den Atem*" ("*Noch einmal erklärt*", L 188), two aphoristic verses that touch the root of Bauer's intellectual vision. It may be the shortness of such poems that led the publisher of the Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung to suggest, rather inanely, that in *Logbuch* the influence of Raffaele Alberti (whom Bauer never read!) has been replaced by the influence of the haiku (for which Bauer doesn't care a damn!)<sup>18</sup> There is not a hint of the Japanese haiku in Bauer whose poems are free verse, loosely structured, and not at all imagistic, as the haiku is. Their source is more often in the thinking faculties of the poet than in his senses. The titles are telling: three different poems in the same collection have an identical title: "*Über ein Wort Nachdenkend*" (N30, 51, 63); a fourth is called "*Über Worte Nachdenkend*" (L 8)<sup>19</sup>; two more are entitled "*Nachdenklich*" (L 45, 103); then there is "*Gedanke*" (L 11) and "*Gedankenflug*" (L 151) as well as a poem called *Fragen und Antworten* (L 38) and another *Fragen, Antworten* (L 147). Obviously, there are some problems here that an editor would want to sort out before publishing such a manuscript. But these titles (and more could be added) reveal that, thoughtless as it might be for him to give different poems the same title, this poet's approach to the world is, quite literally, thoughtful. The extent to which this poetry is ratiocinative is evident from the opening two lines of another poem, "*Erhellte Gedanken*": "*Was mir einleuchtet,/Erhellte mich.*" (L 55). If you translate this into 'what is plausible/enlightens me', you lose the play on words, but you gain clarity: Bauer's light is not some Blakean illumination or Buddhist enlightenment, it is the light of reason. His belief in the power of reason is ultimately the source of a defiant hope that he never abandons:

*Grundton*

Ich hoffe  
Immer.  
Drei Worte:  
Der Ton meines Lebens. (L 77)

The longest poem in the *Logbuch* manuscript, a 9-part sequence entitled "*Am Rand und in der Mitte*" confirms this simple faith in a rational order based on elementary facts of experience and reality. In it a sick man reflects on life and strips it to its essentials. The eighth section is a credo that informs the whole of Bauer's life and work:

Die Erde: la terra: la terre: the earth.  
Der Himmel: il cielo: le ciel: the sky.  
Die Sonne: il sole: le soleil: the sun.  
Der Tag: il giorno: le jour: the day.  
Die Nacht: la notte: la nuit: the night.  
Der Mensch: l'uomo: l'homme: man.  
Das genügt für heute. Damit lebt er.  
Das umfasst alles und ihn selbst.  
Es genügt. Auch für später. (L 56, sect.8)

The second unpublished manuscript Bauer completed, *Verse von einer Universität*,

takes up these same themes. As the middle stanza of "*Der Poet erinnert*" has it:

Der Poet erinnert:  
Sieh: der Himmel,  
Sieh: deine Kindheit,  
Sieh: die Zeiten des Jahres,  
Sieh: die Erde,  
Sieh: die Erde, wie sie  
sein sollte und wie sie ist.  
Er erinnert an Gesichter und Stimmen,  
Aus Splittern fügt er wieder zusammen,  
Was ganz sein sollte:  
Das Menschengesicht.  
Daran erinnert er. (V 25)

This is vintage Bauer--Bauer the humanist, Bauer the moralist. It is the restoration of the human face as it ought to be, its recovery from the horrors of the twentieth century--that is the poet's task. The poems and the poetry breathe more freely in this collection. There are few short, aphoristic poems, and quite a number of long, searching poems. The manuscript, in appearance exactly like *Logbuch* and *Atemzüge*, has 95 poems on 161 pages--fewer than half the number of poems in *Logbuch* and on almost twice the number of pages.

The genesis of *Verse von einer Universität* seems to have begun in May 1961 with a mimeographed typescript bearing the same title. It contains 16 poems, numbered I to XVI, all without titles, and all but one of which are included in the final collection, though instead of numbers they now bear titles. The second stage in the evolution is a manuscript I received in May 1963 fresh off the poet's typewriter: 13 poems on 8 pages which the title page calls: "*Notizheft von einer Universität*", implying once again that the poet sees himself as a kind of literary journalist who records his daily observations and thoughts in verse. The poems are numbered I to XIII and untitled; they are different from the 1961 group, and 10 of them turn up in the final manuscript with individual titles instead of numbers. So, by 1963, 25 of the 95 poems in *Verse von einer Universität* had already been written, and they underwent no revisions except for the addition of titles and the deletion of the last 3 lines of the last poem (XVI), whose first line became its title: "*Was mir beim Lehren hilft*". The deleted lines, "*Ich bin ein Einzelner,/Aber ich umarme./Ich umarme alles,*" may have seemed too *Sturm und Drang* for Bauer five years later; it sounded as though it had leapt straight out of Schiller's "*Ode to Joy*".

After 1963, the chronology of the manuscript is convoluted. Bauer includes the "*Notizheft von einer Universität*" in its entirety in the 1964 anthology *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*<sup>20</sup>, but he now calls it "Verse von einer Universität". He republishes this same group of poems under the same title in 1975 in his *Lebenslauf*<sup>21</sup>, though by then the larger manuscript with that title, containing 10 poems with new titles that are still numbered in *Lebenslauf*, had been complete for years and was still making the rounds of the publishers.

Exactly when the final version of *Verse von einer Universität* was completed is difficult

to determine. Bauer himself gives conflicting dates. An entry in his diary on "11. Mai 1966" refers to it laconically: "*Manuskript abgeschlossen*."<sup>22</sup> This date is consonant with what he writes in a letter to me on November 12, 1966, when I was in the process of selecting the poems for *The Price of Morning*: "*Was die Auswahl betrifft: würdest Du einen Blick auf das Manuskript Verse von einer Universität werfen wollen? Es ist ein ziemlich umfangreiches und abgeschlossenes Buchmanuskript...*" But in the introduction to his *Lebenslauf* he says: "...*Verse von einer Universität (1965, und noch nicht abgeschlossen)*."<sup>23</sup>

I am inclined to dismiss the 1965 date because I trust his diary more than his recollections 8 years later. Besides, Bauer, as I have shown, also incorrectly dated *Atemzüge* and *Logbuch* in the same introduction. Most writers are notoriously cavalier about such dates; their concern is to get their manuscripts published and out of the way so that they can get on with the next one--as Bauer himself wrote to me in a letter I quoted earlier: "*Zudem was es meine Absicht, den Tisch abzuräumen und von Gedanken an diese Manuskripte nicht mehr belästigt und aufgehalten zu werden*."<sup>24</sup> As to his claim that the manuscript is 'not yet completed', it reflects a plan to expand it which he expressed in another letter to me on August 7, 1967: "*Mit dem Manuskript Verse von einer Universität, aus dem Du einige Stücke übertragen hast, habe ich nichts getan. Ich finde, es muss ganz anders werden, viel voller, entschiedener und weiträumiger*." He reconfirms his intentions in 1974 when he refers to the manuscript as one "*das noch nicht abgeschlossen ist und an das ich als Summa denke*."<sup>25</sup> Alas, the writer proposes, time disposes. Perhaps his heavy commitments to the university prevented him, but there is no evidence that he ever got even started on the intended major revisions. The manuscript that we have is as he compiled it in 1966. Had it indeed been 'in progress', as these remarks might suggest, at least some of the poems written after 1966 would, surely, have been included. But not a single poem from the 1971 manuscript of *Atemzüge* is included, whereas there are 11 poems from *Logbuch*, and 9 from the *Notizheft* manuscripts.

The title *Verse von einer Universität* suggests that the original idea for the collection was to write a book of poems about life at a university, not such a far-fetched proposition for a writer who was a university lecturer. There are a number of poems on students, professors, library reading rooms etc. in the collection to meet that objective. But this focus was too narrow for Bauer who articulates his idea of a university in the opening lines of the first poem in the manuscript, "*Universität*":

Hier ist der Ort,  
Um die uns überlassenen  
Weisheiten und Irrtümer durchzudenken,  
Werkzeuge zu schärfen,  
Schritte vorzubereiten zum Morgen.  
Hier ist der Ort,  
An dem die Kontinente und Zeiten zusammenkommen  
Zu unerschöpflichem Gespräch. (V 1)

But even this classical sense of *universitas* is not large enough. For him there is also

a university of life, whose teachers include your shoemaker, the cleaning woman with water in her knees, and the Jewish tailor who by sheer chance survived the camps:

Sprich mit ihnen, du wirst erstaunt sein  
Über die Belehrungen, die sie Dir geben  
Von jener Universität,  
Die keine Diplome gibt, nie aufhört,  
Nur schweigsames Aushalten kennt. (V 3)<sup>26</sup>

Now the scope has become so universal as to accommodate almost any poem on any topic. The result is a heterogeneous collection of long and short poems--all of them unrhymed--on subject matter ranging from Socrates to an old man walking a dog, from King Lear to the Italian labourer on the streetcar, from the Arctic to Guernica, and from the newspaper boy to Sisyphus. What unifies these poems is their tone and the attitude of the poet--occasionally nostalgic, but always thoughtful, always compassionate, always upbeat, and always giving or implying advice. Even Sisyphus is ordered into line: "*Sisyphus! Befreie dich von deinem Stein!*" (V 41) The familiar themes of the beauty of this earth, of life as a journey, of the ubiquity of hope in the faces of the young, in morning light, in a flower, in a painting--they are much in evidence, and they overcome the troubled moments which he deliberately eschews:

Das Aufsuchen des Dunklen  
Ist Ausflucht.  
Den Magier zu spielen  
Ist leicht.  
Das Abbrennen von Feuerwerk  
Enthält keine Pflicht.  
Poeten: seid ihr Späher  
Oder Betrüger? Die Verzweiflung der Zeit  
Ist nicht nur Verzweiflung. (V 7, sect.V)

The poet as scout is not enough for Bauer. In *Verse von einer Universität* there are 3 separate groups, each entitled "*In Mein Notizheft*", with a total of 16 short, untitled verses (V 18-21, V 80-83, V 85-92), but his frequent use of the notebook idea, conjuring up the image of the poet as a recorder of events, belies his firm commitment to writing as a form of teaching. The didactic is never far from his mind or his text because the teacher like the writer is a purveyor of light. In "*Anekdote*", which relates the story of Luther bowing to his students in case one of them becomes a great light ("*eine Leuchte*"), Bauer, himself a teacher for much of his life, writes:

Leuchten: das heisst Licht verbreiten,  
Damit die anderen besser sehen können,  
Es heisst, den Weg erhellen,  
Denn da ist Finsternis, woher sie kommen,  
Da liegen Blöcke auf dem Weg, über die sie stolpern,  
Da sind Fallgruben falscher Versprechungen  
Und die einladenden Rastplätze der Halbwahrheiten.  
Erleuchte also, Lehrer, leuchte im Finstern.  
Geh voran. (V 60)



Perhaps it is the didactic spirit in these poems that turned his German publishers off. The manuscript fared no better than *Logbuch*, and has not been published yet. 10 of its poems appeared in *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, 18 in *Lebenslauf*, and another 15 in English translation, but allowing for duplication only 26 of the 95 poems have been published. Not many have gone on the journey to which Bauer invites his readers in *Verse von einer Universität* with an epigraph from St. John Perse: "S'en aller! S'en aller! Parole de vivant". But he anticipated correctly in the last two lines of the final poem, "en route", that the journey would continue beyond his death: "Andiamo--en route--let's go--/Unterwegs. Noch/Über das Ende hinaus." (V 95)<sup>27</sup> For the poet that journey involves speech:

Aber was  
Würde ich sein,  
Wenn ich nicht spräche?  
Atem ist gut.  
Atem zu einem anderen hin  
Ist besser. (V 24, IV)

And that speech is heard beyond the grave. It is the metaphorical act of drawing breath that provides the title for Bauer's third, and final, unpublished poetry manuscript, *Atemzüge*, a 8½ X 11 typescript, bound exactly like the other two. I have a carbon copy and the original, which is paginated (incorrectly) by hand, perhaps by Bauer himself or by one of his publishers. The manuscript has 83 pages containing 73 poems plus an epigraph. According to Bauer's letter quoted earlier<sup>28</sup>, he put the manuscript together in the summer of 1971. But this was not the date of composition. Five of the poems in this collection make their appearance much earlier: two are in *Notizheft*, including the significant "Besucher, erwartet" (A 71); one, "Berührung von Taubenflügeln" (A 73) is in a manuscript called "Taubengedichte", dated "1961"; another, "November: Grau" (A 60) is part of a cycle of 12 poems, "Auf Erden und im Licht. Ein Monatskalender", dated "Dez.1962"; and the fifth, "Städte" (A 62), was published the same year in *Klopfzeichen*<sup>29</sup>. The rest of the poems were probably written between the summers of 1968 and 1971. For one thing, the form urges this conclusion: all but five of the poems are rhymed, and rhyme is something Bauer took up seriously in *In Mein Notizheft* during the summer of 1968. Moreover, the tone and subject matter of the collection also argues for a date later than *Logbuch*.

Among Bauer's papers I found a folded sheet on which he wrote "Atemzüge", underlined it, and then added underneath: "Die Erde wird nicht alt". Since there is no poem with that title, it is reasonable to assume that he considered this as an alternative title to the collection. Beneath it he wrote: "inclus. Taubengedichte und Monatskalender." And then, once again, "Atemzüge", but this time boxed and framed in bold strokes with a pen. Bauer is here thinking on paper, as writers are wont to do. He has reached a decision--*Atemzüge* it'll be! Only one poem each from the other two cycles are eventually included, but the matter of the title is settled. Perhaps he rejected "Die Erde wird nicht alt" because it could mean both 'the earth never grows old' and 'the earth isn't going to live much longer'--an ambiguity he could not accept. No one could accuse Bauer of defeatism or pessimism. If he looked into the abyss he always came away with a note of defiance and hope. But that he should con-

sider such an ambiguous title at all is indicative of a new, darker tone. In fact, in this collection he does not merely look into the abyss, he descends into it:

*Auch ein Gewinn*

Sah nicht nur: ich war im Abgrund:  
's ist eine andres Wort für Nacht.  
Was von dort ich rückgebracht?  
Unverzerrt blieb mir der Mund. (A: epigraph)

Precisely. He has witnessed the horrors of his age, but he will not surrender to them. I recall an evening in his apartment when we discussed what made us writers, and I explained that on a personal level, writing was for my mind what breathing was for my body, that without it my spirit would suffocate. Yes, we agreed, it was that and more: breath gave birth to speech, to language, and that placed upon us the burden of speaking out in the name of our common humanity. For Walter "*Atemzüge*", 'drawing breath', was even more elementary--a visceral experience, each inhalation an affirmation of his existence and of life itself. But, alas, with advancing years, breathing becomes more difficult. In his final collection of poetry there is growing evidence that Bauer has profound doubts about human existence.

*Atemzüge* is divided into three parts: "*Testamente*", "*Wiederbesuchter Kontinent*", and "*Hier und Dort*".<sup>30</sup> The first section contains 15 poems that pay tribute to the work of great artists of the past. The title "*Testament*" refers to the legacy they have left humanity. Apart from a poem on Virgil, a reference to Malraux in a poem about the Lascaux cave paintings, and a mention of Erasmus and Mann along with Bruegel, Goya, Moore and Picasso in a poem about the creative hand ("*Der Geist*", A 2), the remaining poems are about the work of painters and sculptors: Barlach, Braque, Bruegel, Chen Wu Fei, Corot, Daumier, Goya, Kollwitz, Matisse, Rembrandt and Renoir. Through the eyes of these artists a rich but disturbing picture of the world takes shape, one that includes in "*Goya: Haus des Tauben*" a vision of hell. '*Haus des Tauben*' is the German for *Quinta del Sordo*, the name of Goya's last residence, whose walls he, an old man now and completely deaf, covered with paintings of a vision of the horrors of this world. These *pinturas negras* are bone-chilling and desperate paintings, and in sketching Goya's legacy in words, Bauer has to descend to the very bottom of the abyss, and he ends, a rare moment in his work, in an image of despair:

Was er jetzt sieht. Das kommt aus ihm, das steigt, lautlos, das wächst  
Wie schwarze Wasser. Testament, auf helle Wände hingeworfen:  
Ein ungeheures Schlürfen, Schmatzen, Knochenbrechen schwappt durchs Haus:  
Saturn verschlingt eins seiner Kinder. Blut wie Saft. Das schmeckt.  
Ein Koloss wächst: Panik: Die Völker fliehen. Hexen lachen.  
San Isodoro wartet auf die trunkenen Pilger. Und was flüstert  
Die Kreatur dem alten Manne zu, auf seinen Stab gelehnt? Was  
Kocht die Hexe grinsend in dem Topf? Die Parzen: was brauen sie?

Dämonen zeitlos in der Zeit. Ein alter tauber Mann  
Im "Haus des Tauben" füllt die Wände, jeden Raum. Mit einer Hand  
"Ich hab gesehn." Sein Testament. Nichts wird gelernt.

Ein Schmatzen, Schlürfen, Rülpsen Tag und Nacht im Haus.  
Saturn zerfleischt sein Kind. (A 7)

Along with "*Bruegel: Die Blinden*", this is one of the most powerful and darkest poems Bauer ever wrote, and he included them both in his *Lebenslauf*<sup>31</sup>. Bruegel's world of folly, vanity and greed offers no reassurance either. The six blind beggars move through a landscape that is indifferent to their fate:

Die Erde hört und sieht nicht. Oder doch? Dann sieht sie ungerührt,  
Wie Blinde fallen müssen, die ein Blinder führt.  
Geduld: sie werden von dem Sturz, den sie getan, schon wieder aufstehn,  
Sich sammeln, Staub abstreifen und im Dunkeln weitergehn. (A 5)

This sombre picture of the human condition in the concluding lines of the Bruegel poem recalls the Sisyphus myth. Gone is the brash reprimand administered to Sisyphus in *Logbuch*; what remains is the meaningless continuation of an absurd life. Both this and the Goya poem are two of the three only unrhymed poems in "*Testamente*", but in the last stanza of "*Bruegel: die Blinden*", suddenly, incongruously in a world that has neither rhyme nor reason, Bauer turns to rhyme, as though the horror threatened chaos and he needed a strong form to hold things together. It may be this same sense of chaos and violence overwhelming civilization that induced Bauer to rhyme almost all the poems of the last five years of his life. At the age of 70, he chose to make the Bruegel poem the last in *Lebenslauf*, leaving his readers with an image of ignorant travellers moving in darkness. Art is the only remaining defence in a world falling apart. It was to remain his final public statement.

There are signs of a deeply troubled intelligence already in such poems as "*Canada*", which he also published in his *Lebenslauf*, and which culminates in silent resignation: "Aus der Arktis kommt die Endsumme aller Weisheit./Schweigen. Nichts weiter. Schweigen. Das Ende der Zeit."<sup>32</sup> This bleak vision looms larger in *Atemzüge*:

*Beschwichtigung ein Uhr nachts*

Zu leicht befunden, wenn gewogen?  
Hat mich der Tag und hab ich ihn betrogen?  
Wird er mir zugerechnet oder abgezogen?  
Was halt ich, fragend, nachts von solchen Fragen?  
Das Nichts wird schonungslos als Nichts erkannt.  
Was, stets im Zeitverrinn, halt ich in meiner Hand?  
Soll ich mit offnem oder zugepressten Munde mich beklagen?  
Bei wem? Mir selbst? Dem Klagenden, dem Leeren?--Fragen--  
Da trifft mich unerwartet Licht:  
Mozart. Er sagt: Ich hatte Furcht und fürchtete mich nicht. (A 47)

The poet here confronts nothingness empty-handed, without embellishments, without escape hatches, without denial. There are no metaphysical subterfuges either. In the poem "*Städte*" (A 62) he makes a small, but revealing change from the earlier version of the same poem which he had published in both *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge* and *Klopfzeichen*: he



substitutes "*ich habe es beklagt*" for "*Gott sei's geklagt*"<sup>33</sup>. There is no place for God in an ultimately empty and meaningless universe.<sup>34</sup> What restores his spirit in this hopeless situation is Mozart whose music has passed through the dark tunnel of suffering and reached a state of serenity. Art provides an ironic form of transcendence.

Bauer thought of himself as such an artist, and most of his poems reach for serenity. In "*Testamente*" he takes up the question of the role of art in life--can it change things, improve the human lot? The original "*Käthe Kollwitz*" poem (A 12), in the typed manuscript, gives a curiously ambivalent answer: "*Kunst rührt. Sie ändert nichts. In diesem Falle:/Ja.*" In other words, art doesn't change anything, but Kollwitz's art does. These two lines are later crossed out by Bauer, probably in his last year because I showed him my translation of the poem in 1975 before publishing *A Different Sun*<sup>35</sup>, and he left it in its original version. Evidently, Bauer agonized over the practical use of the arts, as other artists have. And like them he had doubts about whether or not art changes the world. But poetry did provide him to the very end with a meaningful way to travel.

The 'revisited continent' of the second section of *Atemzüge* is childhood. All 12 poems of this group conjure up memories of childhood. They begin as a *recherche du temps perdu*, moving through golden spring days full of promise, Easter celebrations, memories of stolen apples, of swimming in the river and roasting potatoes in an open fire, but also of harsher lessons learnt about labour, cold and hunger--till in the end, in "*Besuch des uralten Vogels*", the poet finds what he is looking for: himself. The ancient bird is Phoenix, and he calls out to the young boy as he stands by the window one evening watching a flaming sunset:

"Zu mir gehörst du, Knabe," schrie da Phoenix, "immerdar zu mir,  
Verwundet ewig nun mein Sohn auf Erden, hier,  
Wo noch zu viele dämmertrüb im Schläfe liegen,  
Hab ich dich ausgesucht, mir selber gleich zu fliegen  
Und für die Stummen, Dunklen aufzuschrein.  
Zu sprechen und zu Zeiten leicht zu singen,  
Erkenne darin das Geheimnis meiner Sichelschwinge."

Da hab ich ihn gesehn im grossen Abendschein.  
Da ist sein Blick mir durch und durch gegangen.  
Da hat mein Leben angefangen. (A 28)

Thus a poet is born whom a higher (inner) voice has charged to speak for those who are mute and who live in darkness.

The 45 poems of the third section, "*Hier und Dort*", represent the voice of that poet, now an old man but still celebrating what is good and beautiful, still refusing to surrender to despair. What hope there is has its roots in simple acts of common humanity, such as he celebrates in the final poem of this manuscript. "*Berührung von Taubenflügeln*" is dedicated to 'an unknown English corporal', undoubtedly proof that the poem is autobiographical. It tells the story of a prisoner-of-war who is thirsty and to whom one of his guards gives to drink--nothing sensational, just a cup offered, halfway through the poem:



Und ich sah den Becher, den die Hand hielt,  
 Hand von einem jungen Fremden,  
 Den ich gestern noch erschossen,  
 Der noch gestern nach mir suchte,  
 Und er hob den Becher stumm zum Munde,  
 Wollte ihn zum Munde heben,  
 Und er sah mich, seinen Feind, den Fremden,  
 Der nicht ihn: den Becher ansah,  
 "Denn ihn dürstete..."; wie die Geschichte sagt.

Zögernd trat er fort vom Feuer  
 In der ungeheuren Stille,  
 Trat zu mir und sagte: Trinke--  
 Sagte es mit seiner Hand nur,  
 Nur mit einem Blick, nur  
 Mit dem Becher: Trinke.  
 Und ich trank die Wärme, trank und trank sie.

Da in tiefer Finsternis  
 In der ungeheuren Stille  
 War etwas, ein Hauch, ein Flüstern,  
 Da in tiefer Finsternis  
 In der ungeheuren Stille  
 Flog die Taube. (A 73)

The dove of peace comes in response to a gesture of universal brotherhood, a gesture of human love born in the silence and darkness of the world to transcend all anguish--a fitting conclusion to *Atemzüge*, Bauer's final literary testament.

Perhaps Bauer's German publishers found his humanistic gestures too simplistic, even sentimental. Or maybe they considered his use of rhyme in all but five of the poems anachronistic. Whatever the reasons, neither Bauer nor his agent were able to place the manuscript. To my knowledge, only 12 of the 73 poems in *Atemzüge* have so far been published in the original, another 8 in English. Duplication<sup>36</sup> reduces this number to only 14 to have appeared in print--12 of them from "*Testamente*"!

While Bauer suffered from this neglect in the last years of his life, it did not stop him from writing. No sooner had he finished the other manuscripts than he turned his attention to a new set of poems. I received a mimeographed typescript of 11 pages, stapled together, whose title page identified them as "*Postkartengedichte*", and carried the date: "*Christmas 1971*". It contained 25 short poems, all rhymed and all titled. The following year I received a similar manuscript of 8 pages, with another 15, slightly longer poems which the cover page announced as "*Letzte Postkartengedichte*", and dated "*Christmas 1972*". They were not to remain the 'last'. A year later the third typescript in the series arrived: "*Postkartengedichte III*", dated "*Weihnachten 1973*"--18 poems on 9 pages. Although there were no more in the last three years of his life, I am convinced that Bauer had by then come to think of these typescripts as a single manuscript that he planned to turn into a book. On one of the typical half-pages of scrap paper he was fond of using, and of which I found a number in his

apartment, he had noted: "*MS PKG*", followed by the titles of 7 poems, 5 of which are part of the "*Letzte Postkartengedichte*". Evidently, a book was in the making.

Probably it started quite literally with postcards. Occasionally, Walter was inspired by a picture postcard--of a bird, a drawing, a flower. The result were poems usually short enough to be written on postcards. Actually, he would glue the postcard on the top half of a full size sheet of paper, write the poem underneath, and make photocopies of it to dispatch to his friends. This may have suggested to him to put a number of them together as "*Postkartengedichte*". Then the idea grew because it met with a deeper conviction Bauer had of his poems as messages he sent out--why not on postcards?!

*Empfänger unbekannt*

Ich schreibe  
Immer an jemanden,  
Auch wenn ich nicht weiss,  
Ob ihn mein Gruss erreicht.  
Die Bewegung zu einem anderen hin  
Ist mir teuer. (L 2)

All of the 68<sup>37</sup> 'postcard poems' are rhymed and new; none of them appear in any of the other manuscripts, and none of them--keeping in mind my earlier *caveat*--have been published. Their subject matter ranges far and wide: a pen drawing by Matisse, a cherry tree in blossom, his little dog "Joy", a bird painted on a wall in Knossos, Goya at age 80, a swallow. Old themes are taken up one last time to be restated more succinctly. None of these poems is longer than 17 lines; most of them are around 10 lines. In a 12-line poem ("*Eine durchaus nicht alltägliche Sache*") he thanks his mother for teaching him to remember every time he goes to sleep in a freshly made bed that not everyone is that lucky:

"Hör, mein Junge, da ist hier und dort manch guter Mann,  
Der nicht so wie du in frisch bezogenem Bette liegen kann,  
Und er hat sich so wie ich nach Heller und nach Pfennigen gebückt,  
Doch ein Bett zu haben ist ihm nicht geglückt." (P 29)

And his father remains his model. In 10 lines ("*Alles zu seiner Zeit*") he describes how he comes home from work, takes off his boots, washes, eats, reads with sleepy eyes in the newspaper, and then takes stock of the day:

Das kleine blaue Heft zuletzt, da trug mein Vater langsam ein,  
Was er von morgens sechs bis abends acht vollbracht:  
Drei Fuhren Holz, zwei Kalk, zwei Ziegelsteine und Zement;  
Und das getan, sagt' er uns allen und sich selber gute Nacht.  
Da war ein guter Mann, den, da er unten war, die Welt nicht kennt.  
Ich wünschte, ich, sein Sohn, könnte ein so getreuer Schreiber sein. (P 5)

Even fewer lines suffice to reaffirm the magnificence of the earth:

*Sonnenvogel (Eskimozeichnung)*

Sieh: schon glühen seine Schwingen,  
Die das Licht vom Saum der Arktis traf!  
Sonnenvogel: bald wird er für alle Feuerbrüder singen,  
Noch den kleinsten rührt er feuerflügelschlagend an,  
Weckend ihn aus stimmlos grauem Schlaf:  
Höre, Zeisig, Amsel, hör ein jeder: Frühes Jahr begann!  
Ah! Gesang, von dem die frische Bläue bebend hallt:  
Grosse furchtbar schöne Erde: grosser Aufenthalt. (P 60)

Perspectives are changing. For all the beauty of nature, Bauer prefers the beauty of art. Increasingly he finds the beauty of nature in art, as in this poem. The old questions appear in a new light. If in *Atemzüge* the poet seems doubtful about the efficacy of art, here he celebrates its triumph over nature unambiguously (and succinctly):

*Jahreszeit wechselnd*

Blattlos schnee- und windumflogen stand der Winterbaum,  
Und ich sah im Stamm die Wunden, Riss um Riss. -  
Sieh: auf weisser Fläche plötzlich grüner Blätter Schaum:  
Eine Federzeichnung von Matisse. (P 2)

The juxtaposition of a cold, torn, and wounded *real* nature with the green and fertile nature in Matisse's pen drawing is startling. In "*Gran Partita von Mozart, Köchel 361*", Bauer goes even further. Listening to this music the poet experiences a kind of resurrection:

Leichtes wird Lächeln, und durchlichtet wird was schwer,  
Lehm ist durchsonnt und zauberhaft belebt sich,  
Lazarus wirft das Grabgebilde ab, wirft ab, verwirft den Tod, erhebt sich.  
Musik, ich las es, gräbt den Himmel aus. So ein ganz anderer: Baudelaire. (P 50)

Here art is elevated to serve functions normally reserved for religion. Bauer knows very well, of course, that if art can redeem the spirit, it cannot redeem the flesh. So the triumph of art in *Postkartengedichte* is tempered by a sense of the corroding passage of time, of decay on all sides. Even spring is now an ironic "*Befreiung im März*" for it elicits only tears, and, in the final line: "*Hörst du? Den ungeheuren Schweigeton! Es sang.*" (P 4) There is that cosmic silence again that is the sum of all wisdom. Human wisdom too seems to be perishing, for that is what the owl represents of which Athens' patron goddess says in "*Reisebericht aus Athen*":

'Die Eule fliegt nicht mehr; es ist genug.  
Pallas Athene - denn ich bin's - sagt Lebewohl und wünscht viel Glück;  
Glück ohne Weisheit, ohne Trauer, ohne Lächeln, festes fettes Glück.' (P 47)

In all this we detect the nostalgia and weariness of an aging man. The circle of his life is shrinking, and he is increasingly left alone with his mortality:



*Nachdenklich und gewiss*

Sterblich. Aus Lehm gemacht.  
Wie oft...? So oft hab ich's bedacht.  
Sterblich. Ein Fröstelzittern dann;  
Mit dunklen Wassern steigt in mir die Frage: Wann?  
Nicht jetzt. Noch lange nicht.  
Noch nicht. Ich hänge an dem Licht,  
Das sich in meinen Augen als an feuchter Küste bricht.  
Aus Lehm gemacht und sterblich - doch? Ich sehe Ihn -  
Das grösste aller Bilder - sich um die Erschaffung mühen  
Des Ersten, der ich, ja auch ich, gleich jenem dumpfen Allerersten bin.  
Sterblich. Aus Lehm, doch: Atem, den Er einblies sanft, besorgt und unerschöpflich kühn,  
Fliesst auch in mir und lässt mich Morgen sehn.  
Als was? Als Gegenbild des Unerschaffnen: Nacht. -  
Nicht mehr? Mehr als genug: denn so kann ich bestehn. (P 61)

This is a moving poem because the poet has the courage to confess his vulnerability. He is afraid to die, and in this fear he flirts once more with the image of some god, timidly acknowledging him as the creator, but unable to go any further. He has to fall back on the light imagery that is so preponderant in the poetry of this final period, and content himself with an understanding of man as a 'counter image to the uncreated: night'. Creation means: *Es werde Licht*, whether it is the creation of the world or of a work of art. And creating light requires someone who lights it, a creator, at least in the world of art-works--that is, it requires someone who breathes. Thus light and breath are interdependent: one cannot be without the other. This is a dominant theme, with many ramifications, in Bauer's late poems. Perhaps it is most poignantly expressed in "*Die Lampe*" from 1973:

Im Licht der Lampe,  
Meinem guten Freund der Nacht:  
Wie lange brennst du, Sonne, mir? -  
"Bis dir dein Schlaf die Ruhe zgedacht." -

Und dann, wenn Stille  
Wortlos finster dich umwebt,  
Ist da nichts mehr, mein Freundesstern,  
Was atmend bleibt, was dich belebt? -

"Oh ja," das Licht der Lampe sagt,  
"Ich wart im Dunkeln, bis es tagt;  
Ich, Sonne deiner Nacht, will wieder brennen,  
Ich leb von dir, du zehrst von mir,  
In deinem Atem und in meinem Licht:  
die Welt ist hier."

We have come full circle. The creator and his creation have become one. The argument could have been more fully developed, but the quantity of material forced it to take second place to the necessary survey. There are other aspects of these poems that could have been fruitfully explored--the images surrounding birds and flight (in around 50 poems),



for instance, that are related to the flight of the imagination; or the centrality of the tree (in over two dozen poems) as an image of human rootedness and aspiration. Or one might have looked into the place of Bauer's native Germany in these poems which include at least two dozen about his childhood but none about his mature years there, though the shame and pain of the Nazi terror continue to burn and surface in many poems. Nor is there space to examine the numerous uncollected poems of these last years, including a handful written in English, some of which were published in the posthumous *Tamarack* tribute referred to earlier. It seemed to me more important to include extensive quotations from Bauer's unpublished poems to afford the reader as much direct exposure to them as possible. After all, in the end it is only the poetry that counts. In this spirit I close with what may well be Walter's last poem, one typed on a half sheet of paper and dated "26.Juni 1976", less than six months before his death:

*Leichtere Zeit*

Hell, das ich staunend sah,  
Ist überwundene Nacht;  
Deshalb, hab ich bedacht,  
Freut mich das Sommerjahr.

Nichts ist gelöst, ich weiss,  
Doch wie ich gehe jetzt,  
Scheine ich unverletzt,  
Atmend belebenden Preis:

Atem ist Lobgesang  
Dieser zu kurzen Frist.  
Heut trägt er mich leicht entlang.  
Ich bin, weil er ist.

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## NOTES

1. Walter Bauer, *Geburt des Poeten*, Suhrkamp, 1980, p.131.
2. None of the manuscripts discussed in this paper are paginated. For reference purposes I have numbered the poems in the order in which they appear. For reasons that should become evident in the discussion of these poems, I have treated both the five sections of *Notizheft* and *In Mein Notizheft*, and the three sections of the *Postkartengedichte*, as single manuscripts. The abbreviations are self-evident: A for *Atemzüge*, L for *Logbuch*, N for *Notizheft* and *In Mein Notizheft*, P for *Postkartengedichte*, and V for *Verse von einer Universität*.
3. Walter Bauer, *Lebenslauf: Gedichte 1929 bis 1974*, Desch, München 1975
4. "Desch schrieb mir, auch schon vor Wochen, ob ich nicht ein Manuskript von mir im naechsten Herbst gedruckt sehen moechte. Ich schlug ihm vor, eine grosse Auswahl von Gedichten vom Anfang bis 72 als paperback herauszubringen. Aber ich habe noch nicht von ihm gehoert. Ich glaube nicht, dass der Band 'gehen' wuerde, hoechstwahrscheinlich kriechen, aber er koennte sich sehen lassen, wenn jemand ihn ansieht. In fact, niemand sonst koennte einen solchen Band vorlegen; sozusagen als ein vorlaeufiges summing-up--was mein 'deutsches' Leben angeht. *Lebenslauf* waere ein guter Titel, scheint mir." (letter to the author, 12. November, 1973)
5. Walter Bauer, *Klopfszeichen*, Ernst Tessloff Verlag, Hamburg 1962
6. Walter Bauer, *The Price of Morning*, selected poems translated, edited and with an introduction by Henry Beissel, Prism International Press, Vancouver, 1968
7. Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun*, poems selected, translated and introduced by Henry Beissel, Oberon Press, Ottawa, 1976
8. Walter Bauer, *A Slight Trace of Ash*, translated by Humphrey Milnes, with block prints by Aba Bayevsky, Roger Ascham Press, Toronto, 1976. This edition was limited to 160 copies, all of them numbered.
9. *The Tamarack Review*, Nos.77/78, Toronto, summer 1979
10. In this paper I have relied entirely on manuscripts, letters, and books in my possession. As Bauer's literary agent I carefully examined every scrap of paper in his apartment and preserved everything I thought might throw light on his life or work. Much of this material is now in the Bauer archives at the University of Western Ontario. Although I believe I have as comprehensive an overview of Bauer's work in his last decade as anyone, not least because of our close friendship during these years, it is nevertheless possible that subsequent scholarship will bring information to light that requires adjustments to the conclusions I've drawn. At the very least, my sifting the welter of poems he left behind will establish a basis for future research.
11. Their number is undetermined because Walter used to type his poems with carbon copies on onion skin paper and send these to friends. I can't be sure that I have copies of all of them. In fact, apart from a few that were reproduced from stencils, the unpublished poems exist in typescript only.
12. This manuscript is unlikely to have been written in 1967 or 1968 because for these years there are dated manuscripts already, and Bauer did not send different batches of new poems to friends at the same time. Besides, there is a clear shift in style in the summer of 1968, which would exclude that year. In 1964, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, appeared, an anthology of "Prosa und Verse 1928-1964", which does not contain any of the *Notizheft* poems. That leaves only 1965 or 1966 for this

manuscript.

13. "Interessieren wird Dich die Reaktion, die ich zu den drei Manuskripten des Sommers erhielt. Der Leiter der Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, an den ich den Gedichtband *Atemzüge* geschickt hatte, schrieb sehr nett, aber er fürchte, dass angesichts der bestseller Sucht und des enormen Druckes, unter dem Verlage wie der seine stünden, für Lyrik kein Platz mehr sei... Zu dem *Logbuch* (dem anderen Band, den ich im Sommer zusammenstellte), bemerkte er--in freundlichem Ton durchaus--dass an die Stelle des Einflusses von Raffaele Alberti (!, den ich nie las) das japanische Haiku getreten sei (das mir völlig wurscht ist) und dass die Stücke als Ganzes aus einer ihm fremden Haltung und Atmosphäre kämen." (letter to the author, "3.Oktober, 1971")

14. "Der vorliegende Band enthält eine Auswahl... aus drei Manuskripten, *Botschaften* (1944-46), *Atemzüge* (1972), und *Verse von einer Universität* (1965, und noch nicht abgeschlossen)." W.Bauer, *Lebenslauf*, op.cit., introduction, p.7 (cf. Note 7)

15. "Ich sah davon ab, Stücke aus einem neueren Manuskript, *Logbuch*, aufzunehmen." *ibid.* p.7

16. *ibid.*, pp. 93 and 98. The poems are also in *Verse von einer Universität* (V4, V99), which may be the reason why Bauer thought he had not taken them from *Logbuch*. An English translation of "*Belehrung aus arkti-schen Gebieten*" as "Lessons from the Arctic" can be found in *A Different Sun*, p.37.

17. 13 of them are in Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun*.

18. cf. Note 7

19. To further confound the issue, there is a stapled and mimeographed manuscript entitled "*Über Worte Nachdenkend*" which is dated "Spring 1971" and contains 15 poems, all but 4 of which are collected in the *Logbuch*. It includes "*Über Worte Nachdenkend*" (N 8), which appears here under the curious title: "*Was man besitzt bis man geht*".

20. Walter Bauer, *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, pp. 390-395

21. Walter Bauer, *Lebenslauf*, pp. 114-119

22. For this information I am indebted to Dr.Günter Hess, Professor of German at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. He is Bauer's official biographer and the keeper of his literary archives.

23. *Lebenslauf*, p.7

24. letter to the author, "3.Oktober, 1971"

25. Walter Bauer, *Lebenslauf*, p. 11

26. This passage is from "*Lehrer, mit wem sprichst du?*" which is included as No.VI in the "*Verse von einer Universität*" cycle published both in *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, p.392, and in *Lebenslauf*, p. 116. The poem has also been published in two different English translation: by Humphrey Milnes as "*Who do you talk to, Professor?*" in *A Slight Trace of Ash*, p.27, and by me as "*Teacher, who are you talking to?*" in *The Price of Morning*, p.95.

27. The poems is No.XIII in "*Verse von einer Universität*" as published in *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, p.395, and in *Lebenslauf*, p.119. My translation of the poem is in *The Price of Morning*, p.33.

28. cf. Note 12

29. Walter Bauer, *Klopfszeichen*, p.65. The poem is also included in *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, p.362. In both cases the poem is untitled.

30. This 3-part structure is by no means as inconsequential as such divisions in poetry books often are. Here it provides a time framework: future (that which will remain of the artist after he has departed), past (childhood), and present ('here and there'), as well as interpretative directions related to "*Sehen, Hören, Sprechen*", the title of a poem that appears between epigraph and "*Testamente*" as a prologue to the collection. But until the whole of it is published the analytical excursions these signals invite would be sheer self-indulgence.

31. Walter Bauer, *Lebenslauf*, pp.128-130, 139-141

32. *ibid.* p.70

33. Walter Bauer, *Der Weg zählt, nicht die Herberge*, p.362; and *Klopfszeichen*, p.65

34. A discussion of Bauer's views on religion has to take into account a group of 12 poems which he gave to his Canadian companion Arden Keay in 1953, and which he entitled, in English, "*Religious Poems*". Based on my discussions of the subject with him I'd say he moved from sceptical theism to moot atheism. Certainly, no form of sectarianism played any part in his thinking. He knew only too well how the churches have exploited the common people to whom he devoted his life.

35. Walter Bauer, *A Different Sun*, "*Käthe Kollwitz*", p. 83

36. "*Goya: Haus des Tauben*", "*Bruegel: die Blinden*" and "*Politischer Emigrant*" have been published in *Lebenslauf*, pp.110, 128-130, 139-141; and in *A Different Sun*, pp.67, 68-69, 48-50. "*Japanischer Holzschnitt*", "*Daumier: die Wäscherin*", and "*Renoir's Grab*" were published under the title "*Testamente*" in some journal or anthology for which I do not have a reference, and in the "*Tribute to Walter Bauer*" in *The Tamarack Review*, Nos.77/78, summer 1979, pp.23, 24.

37. Actually there are only 67 poems because 2 of them (P 21 and P 41) are identical, except for a small but significant revision.